

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SAJ-01 SSO-00 NSCE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4952

INFO DIA

USNATO 3022

AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY BONN

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AMEMBASSY PARIS

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AMCONGEN MILAN

AMCONGEN NAPLES

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 0054/1

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IT

SUBJ: DEMARTINO'S BOMBSHELL; WHAT IT MEANS

REF: ROME 18949

SUMMARY: FIRST REACTIONS TO PSI SECRETARY DEMARTINO'S THREAT

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OF AN IMMEDIATE GOVERNMENT CRISIS (REFTEL) INDICATE THAT THE

COMMUNISTS AND CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS ARE MOUNTING MAJOR EFFORTS TO PLACATE THE SOCIALISTS. PCI LEADER SEGRE TOLD EMBOFF SITUATION NOW LESS TENSE, AND HE DERIVES ENCOURAGEMENT FROM SOCIALIST SPOKESMAN VITTORELLI'S STATEMENT THAT A "CLARIFICATION OF THE POLITICAL SITUATION NEED NOT LEAD TO CRISIS." HOWEVER, SOURCE CLOSE TO DEMARTINO PUTS CHANCES FOR A CRISIS AS HIGH IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE PSI'S DIRECTORATE MEETING JANUARY 7-8. DEMARTINO HAS IN EFFECT MOVED UP TIMEABLE AND SERVED DC WITH ULTIMATUM ON PSI DEMAND TO ASSOCIATE PCI TO NATIONAL GOVERNMENT MAJORITY. PSI HAS THUS MADE SOME SORT OF GOVERNMENT CRISIS VIRTUALLY INEVITABLE, LEAVING OPEN ONLY ITS IMMEDIATE OR NEAR-TERM TIMING. ABORTION ISSUE WHICH HAS PITTED DC AND PCI AGAINST SOCIALISTS, AND GOVERNMENT'S FAILURE TO CLEAR WITH SOCIALISTS BEFORE APPROVING SENSITIVE ECONOMIC LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS JUST BEFORE HOLIDAYS, AROUSED BITTER SOCIALIST REACTIONS, AND APPARENTLY FORCED DEMARTINO'S HAND WITHIN PARTY.

END SUMMARY.

1. THOUGH HOLIDAYS AND CAUTION HAVE DELAYED DEFINITIVE REACTIONS FROM MANY QUARTERS TO PSI SECRETARY DEMARTINO'S "NEW SOLUTIONS FOR A GRAVE CRISIS" (REFTEL), BASIC ATTITUDES TOWARD IT ARE ALREADY CLEAR. ALSO APPARENT WITH HINDSIGHT IS THE PLAY OF EVENTS WHICH PROMPTED IT.

2. THE SOCIALISTS: UNTIL JUST BEFORE THE CHRISTMAS PARLIAMENTARY RECESS DEMARTINO'S PLAN TO PUT OFF ANY SOCIALIST INITIATIVE TO BRING DOWN THE MORO-LAMALFA GOVERNMENT, AT LEAST UNTIL THE PSI CONGRESS IN FEBRUARY, HAD MAJORITY SUPPORT. THEN TWO DEVELOPMENTS CAUSED THE SITUATION WITHIN THE PARTY TO SLIP OUT OF CONTROL: PARLIAMENTARY MANEUVERING ON THE ABORTION ISSUE WHICH PROVIDED ANOTHER FLAGRANT EXAMPLE OF DC-PCI COOPERATION AGAINST THE EMOTIONALLY HELD PSI POSITION; AND THE GOVERNMENT'S COUP DE MAIN, PRACTICALLY ON CHRISTMAS EVE, IN APPROVING TWO SENSITIVE ECONOMIC MEASURES FOR ADOPTION BY PARLIAMENT: THE DECENTRALIZATION TO THE REGIONS OF THE FUND FOR THE SOUTH, AND THE CONTROVERSIAL MEDIUM-TERM ECONOMIC MEASURES. LATTER MOVES SPARKED IMMEDIATE AND ANGRY SOCIALIST REACTIONS, AND THE INEVITABLE SHARP RIPOSTE FROM THE PRI, WHOSE RELATIONS WITH PSI HAVE STEADILY WORSENED.

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3. MOST GALLING ASPECT FOR SOCIALISTS WAS GOVERNMENT'S (READ L MALFA'S) APPARENTLY DELIBERATE OMISSION OF PRIOR CONSULTATION WITH THEM. THAT THE NORMALLY CIRCUMSPECT SOCIALIST LEADER WAS MOVED TO GIVE A TIT-FOR-TAT, RELEASING HIS BOMBSHELL JUST BEFORE NEW YEAR, INDICATES THAT SENTIMENT WITHIN THE PARTY FOR AN IMMEDIATE "CLARIFICATION" OF THE POLITICAL SITUATION IS NOW DOMINANT. (DEMARTINO'S SECRET OF SUCCESS HAS ALWAYS BEEN SENSING SHIFTS IN THE PARTY'S CENTER OF GRAVITY AND TAKING HIS

STAND FIRMLY UPON IT. HE HAS THUS MAINTAINED BOTH THE PARTY'S
"UNITY" AND HIS OWN LEADERSHIP.)

4. WHAT DEMARTINO HAS DONE UNDER PRESSURE IS ANTICIPATE THE
MOVE SCHEDULED FOR THE CONGRESS AND IN EFFECT PRESENTED THE DC WITH
AN ULTIMATUM TO ASSOCIATE THE PCI TO THE GOVERNMENT MAJORITY
"IN SOME MANNER." THOUGH COUCHED IN LANGUAGE WHICH LEAVES THE
DOOR OPEN TO A COMPROMISE, A POSSIBILITY REITERATED BY SOME SO-
CIALIST SPOKESMEN (VITTORELLI), HIS MOVE HAS ALL BUT ELIMINATED
THE POSSIBILITY OF AVOIDING A CRISIS IN THE NEAR TERM, AND LEFT
OPEN ONLY ITS TIMING.

5. SOURCE CLOSE TO DEMARTINO HAS TOLD EMBOFF THAT PROBABILITY
FOR AN IMMEDIATE GOVERNMENT CRISIS NOW "HIGH," I.E., ABOUT JANUARY
7-8 WHEN SOCIALIST DIRECTORATE CONVENES TO DISCUSS CONGRESSION-
AL PLATFORM. THE DC AND THE PCI HAVE THUS A RELATIVELY SHORT TIME
TO PLACATE THE SOCIALISTS, AND CONVINCE THEM THAT THEIR INTERESTS,
AS WELL AS EVERYONE ELSE'S, WILL BE BETTER SERVED BY

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USIE-00 INRE-00 EURE-00 /054 W

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ROME 0054/2

AWAITING THE RESULTS OF THE PARTY CONGRESSES. THAT EFFORTS ARE
BEING MADE IS EVIDENT FROM THEIR FIRST REACTIONS, SUMMARIZED BELOW:

6. THE DC: INITIAL DC REACTION TO DEMARTINO THREAT OF PRO-
VOKING A GOVERNMENT CRISIS WAS SHARP EDITORIAL IN DECEMBER 31
EDITION OF PARTY DAILY IL POPOLO. EDITORIAL DENOUNCED DEMARTINO'S
"VIOLENT ATTACK ON GOVERNMENT" AS FOLLOWING "ABSURD LOGIC"
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OF SOME SOCIAL DEMOCRATS (E.G., TANASSI, CARIGLIA) IN THINKING
THAT BY "BREAKING INTO FRAGMENTS WHAT LITTLE REMAINS INTACT"
THE OVERALL SITUATION WILL BE "MADE HEALTHY." ARTICLE REJECTED
DEMARTINO PROPOSAL FOR "EMERGENCY GOVERNMENT" (INCLUDING
PCI ASSOCIATION WITH MAJORITY) AND WARNED THAT CRISIS NOW WOULD
"INEVITABLY" LEAD TO EARLY PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS.

7. HOWEVER, JANUARY 2 IL POPOLO CARRIED EDITORIAL, REPORTED-
LY INSPIRED BY DC SECRETARY ZACCAGNINI, WHICH TAKES MORE CON-
CILIATORY LINE. EDITORIAL REAFFIRMS "NECESSITY" FOR DC-SOCIALIST
COLLABORATION AND EXPRESSES WILLINGNESS OF DC TO SEEK "AN ACCORD
THROUGH A FRANK DISCUSSION" OF DC-PSI DIFFERENCES. EDITORIAL
STATES THAT DC IS AWARE OF PSI PRE-CONGRESS "PROBLEMS" AND RATHER
CRYPTICALLY EXPRESSES OPTIMISM THAT "WITHIN A FEW MONTHS" AFTER DC
AND PSI CONCLAVES, PROBLEMS WHICH "TODAY APPEAR INSOLUBLE" CAN
BE RESOLVED. EDITORIAL THEN SHIFTS FROM CARROT TO STICK WITH A
WARNING THAT A CRISIS NOW MIGHT FACILITATE "MOBILIZATION" OF
OTHER PARTIES (E.G., THE DC) FOR AN ELECTORAL BATTLE.

8. CRITICAL COMMUNIST (PCI) ATTITUDE TOWARD LATEST PSI
MANEUVER WAS DELINEATED IN FRONT PAGE EDITORIAL IN L'UNITA JANU-
ARY 2. WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING THAT SOCIALISTS HAVE REASON FOR
DISSATISFACTION WITH THE PERFORMANCE OF THE PRESENT BICOLORE
GOVERNMENT, THE PCI ARGUES THAT AN IMMEDIATE CRISIS, ALONG THE
LINES WHICH DEMARTINO IS SUGGESTING, WOULD NOT BE THE BEST MANNER
IN WHICH TO BRING ABOUT THE RESULTS DESIRED BY DEMARTINO HIMSELF.
SUCH A CRISIS WOULD LIKELY BE QUITE LENGTHY, L'UNITA POINTS OUT,
AND WOULD IN ALL PROBABILITY LEAD THE COUNTRY TO EARLY ELECTIONS.
A POLITICAL EVOLUTION OF THIS NATURE, THE NEWSPAPER ADDS,
WOULD NOT BE A POSITIVE STEP IN THE DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT OF

THE COUNTRY AND WOULD GREATLY ASSIST THOSE IN THE DC WHO HAVE NOT RENOUNCED THE IDEA OF A FRONTAL ENCOUNTER OF THE POLITICAL FORCES AND OF SPLITTING OF THE COUNTRY. FINALLY THE EDITORIAL NOTES THAT A CRISIS WOULD MEAN THE POSTPONEMENT OF ACTION ON THE ABORTION LEGISLATION AND ON THE MEDIUM-TERM ECONOMIC PROPOSALS.

9. DURING A CONVERSATION WITH AN EMBOFF JANUARY 2, PCI FOREIGN SECTION CHIEF SEGRE INDICATED THAT THE POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE HAS CALMED SOMEWHAT FOLLOWING PUBLICATION OF DEMARTINO'S EDITORIAL DECEMBER 31 AND THAT THE INEVITABILITY OF A CRISIS HAS LESSENNED SOMEWHAT. SEGRE OBSERVED THAT VITTORELLI'S COMMENT
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OFFERED SOME HOPE THAT A WAY OUT OF THE CURRENT SITUATION COULD BE FOUND AND A CRISIS POSTPONED UNTIL AFTER THE PSI AND DC CONGRESSES. PCI, ACCORDING TO SEGRE, ATTRIBUTES DEMARTINO'S LATEST TWIST TO BEHIND THE SCENES TENSION WITHIN THE PSI INCLUDING A CERTAIN WEAKENING OF DEMARTINO'S OWN PERSONAL POSITION AS WELL AS TO THE FAILURE OF THE GOVERNMENT TO CONSULT WITH THE PSI IN ADVANCE ON ITS NEW ECONOMIC PROPOSALS. AS A POSSIBLE FACE-SAVING WAY OUT OF THE CURRENT SITUATION, SEGRE SAID THAT THERE ARE HINTS THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL INITIATE CONTACTS ON THE ECONOMIC PROPOSALS WITH THE PSI PRIOR TO THE SCHEDULED JANUARY 7-8 PSI DIRECTORATE MEETING. FOR ITS PART, SEGRE STATED THAT THE PCI WOULD DO WHATEVER IT COULD AT THIS JUNCTURE TO AVOID A CRISIS WHICH WOULD CRIPPLE THE COUNTRY.

10. THE SOCIAL DEMOCRAT PARTY (PSDI) IS THE ONLY ONE IN WHICH MAJOR LEADERS HAVE ALREADY GONE ON RECORD. PARTY SECRETARY TANASSI HAS STATED THAT DEMARTINO'S INITIATIVE MAKES A CRISIS "INEVITABLE"; AND THAT "IT IS NECESSARY TO RECOGNIZE THE SITUATION COURAGEOUSLY, AND WORK FOR THE FORMATION OF A NEW GOVERNMENT." PSDI DEPUTY SECRETARY CARIGLIA, WHO IN AN EARLIER STATEMENT HAD IMPLIED SUPPORT FOR SOCIALIST PRESSURES FOR A CRISIS, REVEALED THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD FAILED TO CONSULT WITH THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS AS WELL BEFORE APPROVING ITS CONTROVERSIAL ECONOMIC MEASURES. CONTRARY TO DEMARTINO'S VIEWS, HOWEVER, HE EXCLUDES ASSOCIATING THE PCI TO THE MAJORITY, "SURREPTIOUSLY OR OPENLY."VOLPE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLICIES, COALITION GOVERNMENT, SPEECHES, PUBLIC ATTITUDES, POLITICAL PARTIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 02 JAN 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976ROME00054
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760001-0740
From: ROME
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760190/aaaadbrv.tel
Line Count: 266
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 ROME 18949
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24 MAR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <24 MAR 2004 by izenbei0>; APPROVED <24 MAR 2004 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DEMARTINO'S BOMBSHELL; WHAT IT MEANS
TAGS: PINT, IT, PSI-SOCIALISTS, PCI-COMMUNISTS, CD-CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS, (DEMARTINO, FRANCISCO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006